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SUBJECT: SOMALIA - Engaging Puntland and Somaliland

REF: A) Nairobi 246
B) Nairobi 345

¶1. (SBU) Summary. Following on our cables (reftels) on the way forward for Somalia, here we propose ways to engage the Somaliland and Puntland regions of northern Somalia. To assure the north maintains its stability in the face of the south's volatility, we propose increased education, economic and good governance assistance. To assure Somaliland and Puntland remain a capable partner on international terrorism, and to bolster their counter-piracy capabilities, we suggest increasing law enforcement, legislative and maritime security support. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) Reftel A outlined the mission's view that a moment of opportunity exists in Somalia. If seized with vigorous U.S. diplomatic, security sector, and development assistance, we could influence marked improvements in Mogadishu in the short- and medium-term, and over larger parts of south central Somalia in the long-term. Reftel B described in more detail the immediate funding needed for security and development programs if we want to exploit this window of opportunity in southern and central Somalia.

¶3. (SBU) This cable suggests ways we can engage and partner with Somalia's relatively more peaceful northern regions of Somaliland and Puntland. Somaliland and Puntland have been largely spared the violence and chaos of southern Somalia, and therefore, have functioning ministries and more effective governments, relative to the south. They stress to us that they sense the encroachment of the chaos to their south. They warn (and we agree) southern Somalia may destabilize them, too, unless they can meet their populace's expectations for security, government services, and socio-economic growth.

¶4. (SBU) They also highlight their new status as a front line in the war against terror. Long before the October 29, 2008 bombings in Hargeisa and Bossaso, the northern Somali governments detected increased al-Shabaab and al-Qaeda-linked activity in their regions. Northern Somalia is a way station for jihadists and weapons transiting east Africa on the way to their southern Somali safe havens. Our goal is to support and cooperate with northern Somalia's governments to disrupt extremists' movements and prevent northern Somalia from becoming another safehaven.

¶5. (U) Note: Somaliland is a self-declared autonomous state in the northwest part of Somalia. It has no international diplomatic recognition, but operates independently of the Transitional Federal

Government (TFG) in Mogadishu. Puntland describes itself as semi-autonomous, but its government cooperates and coordinates with the TFG. Prime Minister Omar Sharmarke and new Minister of Foreign Affairs Mohamed Abdullahi Omaar hail from Puntland, and Puntlanders serve in the TFG parliament and cabinet. United States policy is to deal with both areas as integrated regions of Somalia. End Note.

Development Assistance:
More Democracy and Governance

¶16. (U) Over the past decade, USAID had a fairly modest development assistance program in Somaliland and Puntland focused primarily on supporting peace building initiatives and improving access to basic social services, especially education and water. Only in the last few years has USAID provided funding for good governance initiatives in Somaliland where the International Republican Institute implements a parliament and political parties strengthening program. Somaliland continues to make considerable progress on democratization efforts and planning for presidential elections in late March/early April 2009 is well underway.

¶17. (U) Given the relative peace and stability in Somaliland and Puntland, the time is ripe to expand the portfolio of activities. Such an increase in USG assistance would reward efforts towards peace and stability made by the two regions. If additional funds were made available, we would suggest expansion of the following activities in both Puntland and Somaliland:

¶18. (U) Fostering Peace and Security

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-- Increase USG funding to UNDP's Rule of Law program to expand police and judiciary training initiatives to Puntland and Somaliland. Additional USAID funding will increase the number and specialized training of police recruits and officers as well as enhance legal training facilities and strengthen the judicial structures and indigenous conflict resolution capacities at the local level.

-- Expand current Somalia Youth and Livelihoods Program to Puntland in order to reduce insecurity related to high-risk youth by providing employment opportunities and skills training. This innovative pilot program, currently implemented only in Somaliland, assists education and training providers in developing programs that are focused on meeting labor market demand and helping youth find and successfully pursue livelihood and work opportunities.

¶19. (U) Improving Governance

-- Enhance the democratization process in Somaliland and Puntland through increased support to the current Interpeace and Consortium for Elections and Political Processes programs. Increased funding will go to support for district councils and broad engagement of the local constituencies, with a special emphasis on youth and women.

-- Additional support will be provided for the decentralization of local governance through a series of regional workshops on revenue and land management. Expanded support will include medium and short-term capacity building and institutional development of government agencies through training of civil servants in a wide range of public management skills.

-- Expand the Employment for Peace and Development program through the International Labor Organization (ILO) to Somaliland and Puntland. The program contributes towards the consolidation of the peace processes at district, regional and national levels by supporting the creation of medium scale employment opportunities for communities through labor-based infrastructure activities to be jointly managed by the local district councils.

¶10. (U) Investing in People

-- Expand several current programs to increase access to basic

education in Somaliland and Puntland by rehabilitating community primary schools, training additional teachers, especially women, and increasing support for non-formal education to reach the large number of out-of-school children. Additional resources can be provided to tertiary education institutions that are increasingly under strain as the number of new students increase yearly. Resources could be used to build upon earlier USAID initiatives that established a teacher training faculty at the University of Hargeisa.

-- Increased resources for current health programs will expand the communities in Puntland and Somaliland that benefit from critical Maternal and Child Health interventions and the delivery of technical expertise in MCH and child survival interventions in collaboration with relevant line ministries and local government counterparts.

Security Assistance

¶11. (SBU) On October 29, 2008 suicide bombers launched near-simultaneous, al-Qaeda-inspired attacks against government, diplomatic and NGO offices in Hargeisa, Somaliland and Bossaso, Puntland. Both Puntland and Somaliland have since requested counter-terror assistance. The Yemen-Gulf of Aden-northern Somalia corridor is a major route through which al-Qaeda affiliates their materiel transit east Africa. We must increase our counter-terror and law enforcement assistance and cooperation to the north to assist them and improve Somali-U.S. cooperation combating terror and piracy.

¶12. (SBU) Counter-Terrorism

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-- Puntland's and Somaliland's civilian law enforcement and intelligence agencies lack modern anti-terror laws and the most basic skills and equipment to track, interdict and prosecute terrorists. For law enforcers, we propose providing courses in basic policing, anti-terror investigation, and physical security for government buildings. Somaliland wants to draft improved anti-terror legislation; we could assist with an assessment and proposals for legislation, then follow up with training for police, legislators and prosecutors.

-- Both countries would do well to formulate a national response preparedness plan to coordinate prevention, preparedness, response and recovery after an attack. We could sponsor seminars between with regional or other officials to discuss lessons learned from terror attacks.

-- Somaliland's and Puntland's border control capabilities are in their infancy. They will benefit from basic customs and immigration education, as well as airport screening equipment upgrades and training. We should look for opportunities to include Somaliland and Puntland officials in regional trainings to build contacts with neighboring country counterparts.

-- Northern regions public education systems are weak, and private religious schools that may teach extremism are filling the gap. Somaliland and Puntland could initiate a new national curriculum and set of minimum standards for public and private schools. Somaliland has requested help registering and regulating teachers, and initiating a system of work permits for foreign teachers.

¶13. (SBU) Anti-Piracy

-- Horn of Africa piracy ballooned in 2008, the result of a lack of law enforcement, economic collapse and probably official corruption. Somaliland and Puntland's coasts are vast, yet the two regions have very little patrol and interdiction capability. Somaliland's coast guard consists of several small patrol boats; Puntland's coast guard is contracted to a private company with fewer than three functioning patrol boats. Both regions need funding, equipment and training for their coast guards. Both Somaliland and Puntland have mounted

successful counter-piracy interdictions; with additional support they could do more.

-- As with regional counter-terror training, Puntland and Somaliland officials will benefit from maritime security and anti-piracy training with their regional counterparts. Including Somalis in U.S.-funded training at the Kenyan Maritime Center for Excellence in Mombasa is one possibility.

-- While various international naval task forces patrol the Gulf of Aden and western Indian Ocean, we believe there is very little information sharing with Puntland and Somaliland. Northern Somalis have local knowledge of pirate's activities they are willing to share. We should fully exploit this willingness. In the wake of UNHCR 1851 and international efforts to gather better information on pirate's land-based activities, the United States would do well to formalize our anti-piracy information exchange, especially with the Puntlanders.

RANNEBERGER